



US Army Corps of Engineers
Great Lakes & Ohio River Division

Great Lakes Habitat Implementation Plan

1. **Background.** Over 1,500 people from eight states participated in a one-year effort that culminated on December 12, 2005 with the release of the Strategy for the Protection and Restoration of the Great Lakes. These people represented state, local tribal and federal agencies, along with industry, business, and civic groups, which joined to form the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration. This Collaboration developed a Strategy that focused on eight priority issues identified by the Great Lakes Governors and Mayors.

2. **Project.** This year, Congress provided the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers \$4.5 million for analyses of complex water resources issues within large, multijurisdictional watersheds. Among the six projects selected by the Secretary of the Army for Civil Works was a proposal by the Corps' Great Lakes & Ohio River Division for a 2-year, \$1 million project to develop an implementation plan that builds upon the recommendations of the Strategy of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration, focused on the Habitat/Species priority issue area.

3. **Purpose.** This effort will bridge the gap between the regional needs identified in the strategy of the Regional Collaboration and the programs that provide funding for site-specific, "on-the-ground" actions. This effort will "roll up" the readily available arrays of site-specific projects that have been proposed, expand the information sufficiently to make comparisons, and develop a common understanding for prioritizing these projects based on the environmental outputs and other relevant factors. As a result, there will be greater integration between the various funding programs and more comprehensive information for potential sponsors and proponents of individual habitat projects.

Four products will be developed that support the identification, prioritization, and implementation of actions to protect and restore coastal wetlands and aquatic habitat in the Great Lakes region:

- a. The first product will be a compilation of information about all existing funding programs that may be used to plan, design, construct, and manage site-specific projects or actions to protect and restore wetlands and aquatic habitat in the Great Lakes region, their program requirements and recent funding history.
- b. The second product will be an inventory of place-based actions to protect and restore coastal wetlands and aquatic habitat in the Great Lakes that have been proposed to federal, state, local, tribal and nongovernmental programs, but not implemented because of funding limitations. These would include actions to acquire and preserve properties with valuable habitat and actions involving construction to restore or enhance degraded habitat. Actions will be reviewed to screen out those no longer applicable, and the information on actions updated to include comparable data on costs and implementability.

c. The third product will be performance measures for prioritizing actions based on their ecological value or benefits. These metrics will enable wetlands and habitat protection and restoration actions to be evaluated based on their merits and identify the actions that can deliver the “best bang for the buck.”

d. The fourth product will be an analysis of the actions in the inventory, prioritization using the performance metrics, and identification of existing governmental and non-governmental programs that each action could potentially be implemented by.

4. **Applications.** The products of this effort may be used for a variety of applications by Great Lakes agencies and organizations. The compilation of information on existing funding programs will enable prospective sponsors or advocates for projects to understand the available funding programs and their requirements. The inventory of proposed actions will enable users to examine proposed actions by type or along political boundaries to identify opportunities for partnerships or select actions that are consistent with their strategic goals. The performance metrics will provide a tool for agencies and organizations to plan and prioritize actions through their respective authorities and funding programs. The last product will provide an example of how actions can be compared, prioritized, and aligned with potential funding programs and authorities.

5. **Limitations.** This project must be completed in less than two years with the budget allocated. In order to work within these constraints, this project will compile and analyze existing, proposed actions for preservation and restoration of coastal wetlands and aquatic habitat, rather than attempting to define the “optimal” set of actions from a blank sheet. The inventory will be created from actions that have been proposed in recent years through various funding programs and authorities. It will not be possible to evaluate all possible place-based actions that could be implemented, but this effort will evaluate a wide range of actions, in terms of type and level of benefits, distribution, cost and feasibility.

6. **Participants.** The Corps of Engineers is seeking participation in this project from diverse agencies and organizations that have interest in wetlands and aquatic habitat protection and restoration, including those with programs for funding actions, those that could sponsor or implement these actions, and others that might apply the products of this effort to regional habitat protection and restoration activities. A steering committee will be formed with representatives from agencies and organizations to coordinate the overall project and working groups to oversee development each product. This steering committee will include members from the Collaboration’s Habitat Strategy Team and the Wetlands Subcommittee of the Great Lakes Interagency Task Force.

7. **Schedule.** The steering committee will be formed in May 2006, with initial meetings soon thereafter. The first three products will be developed concurrently in the first year, with an interim report for this portion of the project. The last product will be completed in year two, along the final project report.

8. **Point of Contact.** Mr. Jan Miller, Great Lakes & Ohio River Division, (312) 353-6354 jan.a.miller@usace.army.mil